



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

LORI E. LIGHTFOOT  
MAYOR

October 21, 2019

Jesse Sharkey  
President  
Chicago Teachers Union  
1901 W. Carroll Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60612

President Sharkey,

As leaders in the City of Chicago, there is no question that we share a common commitment to supporting the children of our great city and working to ensure that CPS schools prepare them for success.

Since Thursday, when CTU and SEIU Local 73 went on strike, we have travelled around the city and heard directly from parents and students about the hardships that the strike is causing them.

What we've seen is that our students and families are sacrificing a great deal that cannot be recovered. While we have made progress at the bargaining table, it is unclear that we can reach an agreement today given the current pace. The students and families of Chicago cannot afford to be out of school for any longer, which is why we are asking you to end the strike and encourage your members to return to work while bargaining continues. As someone who is concerned about the success of our students, we hope you see how necessary it is to reopen schools at this time.

In recent days, parents have told us how they are struggling to arrange childcare or face missing work. The economic hardships to families will be difficult to ever calculate.

Seniors applying to college told us they are worried about their applications and letters of recommendation. In fact, a college fair at Whitney Young scheduled over the weekend had to be canceled.

The Simeon football team, one of the top programs in Illinois, will be ineligible for the state playoffs if the strike is not resolved by Tuesday. Our girls tennis teams were forced to forfeit every match in the state tournament this weekend. Our boys soccer teams, including Solorio High

School, looking for its second championship in three years, were unable to participate in the state playoffs.

And perhaps most importantly, with school not in session, it is much more challenging to ensure the health and well-being of our students. Even with school buildings - as well as partner and delegate agencies - remaining open and providing meals and snacks, the fact remains that our students' safety and access to healthy food are far more at risk without the structure of a full school day.

Given where we are in negotiations, continuing this hardship is unnecessary. In the past few days, our bargaining teams have made progress on many issues that you have identified as important to your membership. You have told us and the public that the most essential issues to resolve in order to reach an overall agreement are class size and staffing. And what we repeatedly heard from you was this: "Put it in writing."

We have done that. We put commitments in writing on Thursday and Friday through counteroffers to lower primary grade class sizes in high-poverty schools, and to provide every school with at least one nurse and one social worker within five years.

What we've offered on both core issues addresses concerns for the highest-needs schools first - an approach grounded in equity. And what we've offered is something CPS can both afford, and achieve. That is no small feat.

Our team understands that the union's approval process involves multiple layers and many individuals. Because of this, even once we reach a deal, CTU is likely to take several days to ratify it. Our children and families do not have the luxury of additional days out of school to wait for the process to play out. We ask CTU to stay at the bargaining table and accelerate the pace, but end the strike and encourage your members to come back to work. Our students and families should not continue to bear this burden.

The CPS team will continue to negotiate in good faith and with the same sense of urgency, and we can close out the remaining issues with our students back in class.

I hope you will agree to this reasonable request on behalf of our students.

Respectfully,



Lori E. Lightfoot  
Mayor,  
City of Chicago



Janice K. Jackson, EdD  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Chicago Public Schools